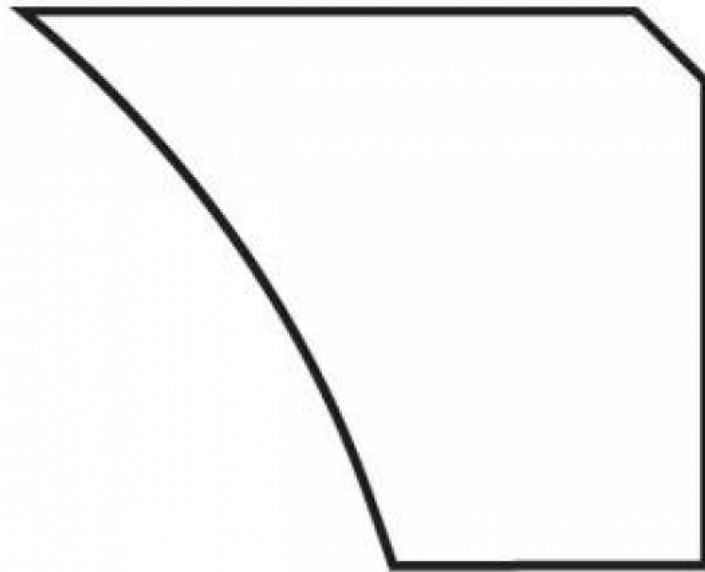


The Experimental Station

An incubator of innovative cultural projects and small-scale enterprises, in Chicago



Project author or developer:
Connie Spreen and Dan Peterman

Where:
US / Stati Uniti / Contea di Cook

Website:
www.experimentalstation.org

The Experimental Station is a not-for-profit incubator of innovative cultural, educational, and environmental projects and small-scale enterprises. The Experimental Station was founded in 2002 by Connie Spreen and Dan Peterman upon a long history of socially, artistically, and environmentally significant projects that had operated quietly but successfully at its location at 6100 S. Blackstone Avenue. In the 1990s, the address, owned and managed by artist Dan Peterman, steadily developed a reputation among local, national and international cultural networks for its vitality, innovation and social relevance. A devastating fire in April 2001 halted activities. The hiatus opened up, however, the exciting opportunity to realize our vision of creating a more sustainable organization, while continuing to foster the types and quality of projects for which the building at 6100 S. Blackstone had become known. That organization is the Experimental Station. Taking its name from a speech given by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1901 ("The Art and Craft of the Machine"), the Experimental Station exceeds even Wright's dream of a place where art and technology would embrace one another under the same roof, where such an encounter would lead to new ideas and innovative designs and practices. A century later, the Experimental Station draws upon the ecological principle of diversity, recognizing the dynamic treasure of resources that a diverse and complex environment brings. Like Wright, we believe that monocultures are deadening, and that the path to innovation is one that draws together people engaged in a broad range of disciplines, practices and interests. Thus we seek to build a diverse set of Experimental Station occupants and projects and to foster collaboration both between them and with outside institutions, enterprises, groups and individuals. It is this aim that gives coherence to the array of projects that we support. Currently among these: independent publishing, contemporary art, experimental music, visiting writers, organic gardening, bulk food purchasing, ecological initiatives, a bicycle shop/youth education program. The Experimental Station seeks to provide essential resources that enable vulnerable, yet valuable initiatives to stabilize and flourish. To this end, we offer various forms of support to our occupants, including workspace at discounted rents, meeting space, technology, and the economy of shared resources. At the same time, we ask our occupants to give back to the community by offering lectures, exhibitions, or other types of events that are free and open to the public. Our newly rebuilt facility at 6100 S. Blackstone has also been designed with the mission of the Experimental Station in mind. In addition to office and retail space, the building includes project/exhibition space, as well as convivial spaces for events and community gatherings. With an eye to detail and to ecologically sound building design, the Experimental Station features reused building materials (including industrial pallets, recycled plastic flooring, and reused bowling alley flooring), rooftop gardens, and two-story tree trunks (bark included!). Over the coming years, as we explore the potential of our unique organizational model and equally unique facility, we look forward to the many dynamic encounters that they will make possible and the presently unknown ideas and solutions that such encounters will spark.

